

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, and 6 remain pending, claims 1 and 4 being independent. Claims 2 and 5 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of dependent claim 2 (now cancelled) and claim 4 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 5 (now cancelled). Additionally, the claims have been amended to remove “means” language to clarify that these claims should not be interpreted under 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner’s indication that claims 2, 3, 5, and 6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. In this Reply, independent claims 1 and 4 have been amended to include the limitations of allowable dependent claims 2 and 5, respectively. Therefore, all remaining claims should be considered allowable.

Prior Art Rejection

Claims 1 and 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as allegedly being anticipated by Misumi et al. (U.S. Patent 6,483,993).

While not acquiescing to the assertions of anticipation set forth on page 2 of the Office Action, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 4 to include the limitations of allowable dependent claims 2 and 5, respectively. Therefore, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 has been rendered moot. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Conclusion

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By

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